

Reflection Friday Easter Week 5 - 2021

The is taken from a reflection by Ronald Rolheiser:

“The most damaging idolatry is not the golden calf but enmity against the other.” (Rene Girard). Many would admit that they do not really love others or their enemies in the way that Jesus asked. We are decent, good-hearted people, fair and just, yet we do not love the way Jesus asked and still struggle, mostly unsuccessfully, to wish our enemies well.

We like to believe we are mature but the battle to love others is ongoing. We want to believe we are loving and forgiving because, essentially, we are well-intentioned, sincere, and able to say all the right things; but there’s another part of us that isn’t nearly so noble. Michael Paul Gallagher SJ wrote: *“You probably don’t hate anyone, but you can be paralyzed by daily negatives. Mini-prejudices and knee-jerk judgements can produce a mood of undeclared war. Across barbed wire fences, invisible bullets fly.”* Loving another as oneself, for most of us, is a desperate uphill climb.

However, maybe we are not as bad as we think we are if we are still struggling to be better. In making us, God factored in human complexity, human weakness, and that growing into deeper love is a life-long journey. What can look like hypocrisy can in fact be a pilgrimage, a *Camino* walk, when seen in the light of patience and understanding.

Thomas Aquinas believed that the heart often moves forward through desire rather than in actuality. We can believe in the right things and want the right things and still not be able to bring our hearts onside. Although “imperfect”, this does more than simply provide us with the minimal standard of contrition needed for forgiveness. It also accords rightful dignity to whom and to what we have hurt.

Marilynne Robinson believes that, even in our failure to live up to what Jesus asks of us, in struggling honestly, there is virtue because we accept the reality that our neighbour is as worthy of love as ourselves, even if, at this point in our lives, we are too weak to provide it. By continuing to struggle, despite our failures to live up to Jesus’ great commandment of love, we acknowledge the dignity inherent in our enemies, believe they are worthy of love and acknowledge our own shortcomings.... Now, that’s a start!